



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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Increase in Salmonellosis Cases Prompts Investigation by North Dakota Department of Health

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is investigating an increase in reported cases of salmonellosis, an infection caused by *Salmonella* bacteria. The illness can cause diarrhea, abdominal cramping, nausea, vomiting and fever. Since July 20, 22 cases of a particular strain of *Salmonella* (*Salmonella* Thompson) have been reported. Because the infections all have the same genetic pattern, they may have all originated from a common source. However, so far the investigation has not revealed a common food item, place or event where all of the cases may have been exposed.

“Illness may be more severe in very young children, older individuals and those with underlying health problems or reduced immunity. People who experience symptoms consistent with a *Salmonella* infection should consider consulting with their health care provider,” according to Laura Cronquist, an epidemiologist with the Division of Disease Control.

The investigation of the outbreak has been challenging. Of the 22 cases, 14 have been from Ward County. The cases who were not from Ward County reported travel to that area. According to Cronquist, “These investigations can be very complex when there is no obvious common exposure. One of the challenges is getting good histories from people. People can forget what or when they consume specific foods or drinks.” Cronquist added that if patients refer to electronic or paper calendars, checkbooks, online account statements, restaurant receipts or grocery store receipts, it may help them remember what they ate or drank.

To assist in the investigation, NDDoH will be collecting information from randomly-contacted people who have not been ill and will compare that information to data that has been collected from people who were ill. This may help narrow down the cause of the infection. The NDDoH is working with the public health programs at the University of North Dakota and North Dakota State University to gather this information. “If a resident happens to receive one of these calls, we hope they will take time to answer the surveyor’s questions,” said Cronquist.

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Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

To reduce the risk of *Salmonella* infections, people should do the following:

- Cook meats, poultry and fish to the proper temperature, which can be found at
 - www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/mintemp.html
- Wash all fresh produce before consuming
- Keep ready-to-eat foods separate from raw meat areas where meats are being prepared
- Clean food preparation areas with soap and water
- Use a household disinfectant to disinfect food preparation areas
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and clean, running water
 - Before and after preparing meals
 - Before eating
 - After using the bathroom
 - After changing diapers or assisting others in the bathroom
 - After handling or touching animals
- Food handlers who have salmonellosis should not return to work until they are asymptomatic and have two consecutive stool cultures that are negative.
- Children who attend child care and child care providers who have salmonellosis (with the exception of those who handle food) should not return to child care until they are asymptomatic.
- Healthcare workers who have salmonellosis should be excluded from work until they are asymptomatic. Employees should refer to their facility's policy for specific recommendations on when to return to work.

People who have questions about this cluster can call the NDDoH at 1.800.472.2180 (ND toll free) or 701.328.2378.

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